

Extracts.

THE SONG OF THE SNOWFLAKES.

"We come, we come, in a mist together;
Fragrant plumes of wintry weather;
Lazily, lazily, floating along;
Like hapless fragments of olden song;
Whirling and eddying the trees around;
Down down, and we know not where."
We come, we come, in a tide together;
Like foam upon the windy weather;
Like feathers dropping from angels' wings;
We sweep the dusky faces of things;
With a pale blue light which softly brings
Earth's windings, sleek down like a feather.

We come, we come, thro' all space together;
Nyxies wrought by the wind and weather;
Darkening the air with a murky pall;
Drifted about in a stormy fall;
And we buffet and buffet the wanderers all;
Beating round, and then and then.

We come, we come, in a maze together;
Like the blossoms blown in the soft spring
weather;
We seek to lose with a measured march
Sings of the clouds that give a birth;
And we wander and wander round Mother Earth;
To warm her in frosty weather.

We come, we come, o'er the hills together;
Like beauteous flowers in the summer weather;
In sunny tresses, water and wind;
Countless, noiseless, and Earth encumbers;
Here if with garlands, and then also elaters;
And we rest in a country together.

—*Lyrics from a Country Lark.*

ARMENIAN TRAINING.

The early training of the Armenian boys in grammar and music (as the words were used at that time understood), developed a refinement of taste which became instinctive; the close and constant study of the poets of their country filled their minds with noble thoughts and beautiful fancies; and the assiduous practice of gymnastics, which was required of them, gave them many good habits; and that which made the Armenian intellect what it was, which lost it its unrivalled suppleness, and created its unfailing versatility, was not so much the formal training of the school as the daily intercourse of the youthful citizen with acute and disciplined philosophers.—*National Education in Greece.*

A WORD FOR GIPSIES.

If I have not, like many writers on the poor gipsies, abused them for certain proverbial faults, it has been because they never troubled me with anything very serious of the kind, or brought it to my notice; and I certainly never took the pains to hunt it up to the discredit of people who had no more believed decent to me. I have found them more cheerful, polite, and grateful than the lower orders of other races in Europe or America; and I believe that where their respect and sympathy are secured, they are quite as upright. Like all people who are regarded as outcasts, they are very proud of being treated as such, and their influence will exert the most daring acts of honesty.—*The English Gipsies and their Language.*

MILN'S EARLY READINGS.

Shakespeare's father had put into my hands for the sake of the historical plays, from which, however, I went on to others. My father never was a great admirer of Shakespeare, the English idiom of which he used to state with some severity. He cared little for any English poetry except Milton (for whom he had the highest admiration), Goldsmith, Burns, and Gray's "Bard," which he preferred to his "Elegy"; perhaps I may add Cowper and Keats. He had some value for Spenser, and I remember his reading to me (unlike his usual practice of making me read to him) the first book of the "Faerie Queene," which he found pleasure in it. The poetry of the present century he saw scarcely any merit in, and I hardly became acquainted with any of it till I was grown up to manhood, except the metrical romances of Walter Scott, which I read at his recommendation, and was immensely delighted with, as I always was with animated narrative.—*Autobiography of John Stuart Mill.*

WORDSWORTH'S INFLUENCE UPON MILL.

In the first place, these poems addressed themselves powerfully to the strongest of my pleasures, the love of the rural objects and natural scenery, to which I had been indebted not only for much of the pleasure of my life, but quite recently for relief from one of my longest relapses into depression. In this power of rural beauty over me, there was a foundation laid for taking pleasure in Wordsworth's poetry; the more so, as his scenery lies mostly among mountains, which, owing to my early Pyrenean distortion, were my ideal of natural beauty. But Wordsworth would never have had any great effect on me, if he had merely placed before me beautiful pictures of natural scenery. Scott does this still better than Wordsworth, and a very second-rate landscape does it more effectively than any of his. What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought, coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to find from a source of joy, of sympathy, and of imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings; which had no connection with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial source of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence.—*Autobiography, by John Stuart Mill.*

PLENTY OF PEPPER—THE ART OF COOKING.

I may say that the first sign of it is in an increasing refinement of taste. When a man has come to realize that the highest quality of a liquor is not its intoxicating power but its flavour, when he begins to prefer wine to gin, and really would rather drink half-a-dozen glasses of old port, and remain sober, than half-a-dozen glasses of strong gin, with all the advantages of getting drunk, that man has made a great step towards an aesthetic and intellectual life. In eating, a parallel progress consists in the preference of delicate flavour to mere stimulus. The ordinary English notion of good cookery, as we find it in places of public entertainment, is simply plenty of pepper. The French are confessedly our superiors in this art, and their acknowledged superiority consists mainly in their perception of delicate gradations of flavour, to which the ordinary British palate, from the constant use of fiery stimulants, is, of course, absolutely insensible. But when, as occasionally in our higher classes, the palate becomes as much alive to the variations of flavour as the ear of a musician to the variety of sounds, there is a progress in the culture of the palate which often precedes a similar advance in other and higher senses. Coarse people will say that we are getting more sensual, as we become more sensitive, and contrast our delicate tastes with the simpler ones of our forefathers. But we are not in reality more sensual; we are less sensual than they were. To prefer a well-seasoned dinner—in which flavour harmonises with, and yet relieves each other, like the notes of a beautiful melody, or the tints of a fine picture—to a glutinous soup or peppery flesh is an advance of the same kind as the higher senses make when we learn to prefer the gradations of first-rate violin-playing to the blare of a big band, or a waltz-song by Puccini to a big picture by Benjamin West.—*Food.* By Dr. Smith.

KEMBLE'S ADVICE TO THE DIVINE.

John Kemble, to use a common expression, took it at a plane the measure of his visitor's foot, expressed himself happy to see Dr. Anderson, and how much pleasure he would have in giving him his advice. "At the same time," said he, "the best way of going to work is not for me, but for you. Dr. Anderson, to read the passage first." This, the worthy doctor, who had too high an opinion of his own powers to be daunted by the advice of any other man, proceeded to do, and was so. Whereupon Kemble, not a little amused with the inflated style of his visitor, gave him this sage advice:—one it would be well for all aspirants at public oratory to remember: "Sir, when you read the sacred scriptures, or any other book, never think how you read, but what you read."—*Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie.*

THE CHAPEL WOMAN.

In a picturesque village, and frequented by tourists in its autumn season, there was a Ritualistic church, the daily service of which was diligently attended by a young lady congregation in most fashionable dress. There stood by the wayside, a stone's throw from the church, two cottages. The one was clean and tidy; with brightly shining windows, and flowering plants, and whitened walls. The other was a miserable jumble of a place, the door of which was always crowded with the young human pigmy, in ragged and filthy, and dirt-dotted, uncombed hair. Here, at this door, the young lady Ritualists, going to and returning from their devotions, dropped, from delicately gloved hands, their hats; and, giving the poor things, "be off to the other side of the road, and get to obtain their notice. And yet, in the one cottage, the pigmy was an able-bodied man with two grown sons able-bodied all-in-all work and wage. In the other cottage, there was but a sickly widow with her crippled, helpless boy. She did chattering when he came to her, and would not let him go, and she paid her way too. And must the whole truth be told? She was a "Chapel Woman," a "joined member" of the Wesleyan body.—*Church Thought and Church Work.*

THE MUNDROU INDIANS OF THE MIDDLE AMERICA.

Like all the American savages, more particularly those of South America, the Mundrou Indians are great slaves and great owners of slaves; and no man can attain to the dignity of a warrior before giving proof of his manhood by suffering the most excruciating tortures. One method of testing this is to put on the hands of the aspirant two instruments like gauntlets or gloves, made of the joints of bamboo, and in which a number of the forest biting ants of the country are confined. The bite of these venomous insects has been described as like putting a red-hot needle into the skin; but the warrior bravely endures, and joins with drum and song in the dance made in his honour. But the most extraordinary custom of the Mundrou is one in regard to their dead. When a Mundrou has killed his enemy, he cuts off the head, extracts the brain through the foramen, nigrum, at the base of the skull, and, filling the skull with cotton, preserves it in a mummified condition outside of his hut. On high occasions he elevates it on the top of a pole or spear. The heads of friends and relations are preserved in the same manner, though with some differences of detail. Thus on certain days a widow will produce the head of her deceased husband, and sit before it, talking to it in tones of melancholy lamentation, or indulging in eulogiums of his greatness and his goodness. Meanwhile, her sympathising friends are dancing wildly around her.—*Casey's "Book of the Races of Mankind."*

A VISIT TO OCTAVE FEUILLET.

Octave Feuillet, the author of "The Romance of a Poor Young Man," which marked an epoch in French literature, and which, in its pure, classical chastity, was the most eloquent protest that could be uttered against the alarming and rapidly-increasing degeneracy of modernism, was a man of letters, of a charming nature. I knew him well in 1847, when he was a lawyer's clerk on the Quai d'Orsay, at a salary, I believe of six hundred francs. He was a great lover of the drama, and I believe he spent most of his earnings for tickets to the Odéon and the Gymnase. I met him again in the forest of Fontainebleau. What a change between his past and his present! Rich, an Academician, the happy father of an interesting family, one of our most successful dramatists, proprietor of the most beautiful villa in Fontainebleau, sole custodian of the splendid library accumulated by our kings in the palace of Francis I. and Henry IV., his lot is indeed an enviable one. Time has dealt gently with this favourite of the Muses; and when I looked into his handsome, smiling face yesterday, I could hardly realize that Octave Feuillet is already in his forty-fifth years.

"You look well," I said.

"I enjoy the best of health," said the happy man, "and I hope that my future will be as undisturbed as the past has been. And yet I am working hard all the time."

"What may we look for next from your pen?" I asked.

"I am at work upon a history of the novelists of all ages and all countries."

"An arduous task!" I said.

"Yes, you are right; but we need such a work."

"Will it be a voluminous book?"

"No; not more than five hundred pages."

This added to my wonderment at the task set-imposed. Surely, Octave Feuillet could not afford to give the world anything trivial and undigested. A history of the novel written in his lucid, flowing, "hate style," must be a most attractive book.

"He chatted gaily about his researches."

"The anecdotal," he said, "with all the immense incidents they had for writing novels, did not improve their chances. I wonder what books the young ladies of Rome read under Julius Caesar and Augustus? What did they do when they had had their fill of Virgils and Ovids, because I am not at all surprised at the case with the successors of Octavian succeeded in corrupting the manners of Roman families. Believe me, good novels and pure morals have almost always gone hand-in-hand in the history of nations."

This was something rather novel to me, and I wanted M. Feuillet to explain what he meant. In reply, he unfolded to me a wealth of research concerning the history of the novel. He was at home in every department of the subject, and indisputably proved how frequently, in the history of a country, a single good novel had exercised the functions of a library, thunderstorm—cleared the atmosphere of notions wrong, and turned a misguided people into better channels.

We walked for hours about the grand old forest, Feuillet keeping me enraptured by his eloquence and knowledge.—*Translated from XIXème Siècle (Léon Jurdan).*

Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli.—On Monday, the 29th December, Mr. Gladstone completed his 64th year, having been born on the 22nd of December, 1809, and on the 21st December, Mr. Disraeli completed 65 years having been born on the 31st of December, 1804.

THE AMERICAN MEXICAN.—Dr. Livingston says that Solé, a famous African chief, offered to him on the occasion of his preaching to his tribe, "I am going to give you people all I can; believe by your merely talking to them? I can make you do nothing except by threatening them; and, if you like, I will let you have them, and with our ships of rhino, or a waltz-song by Puccini to a big picture by Benjamin West.—*Food.* By Dr. Smith.

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